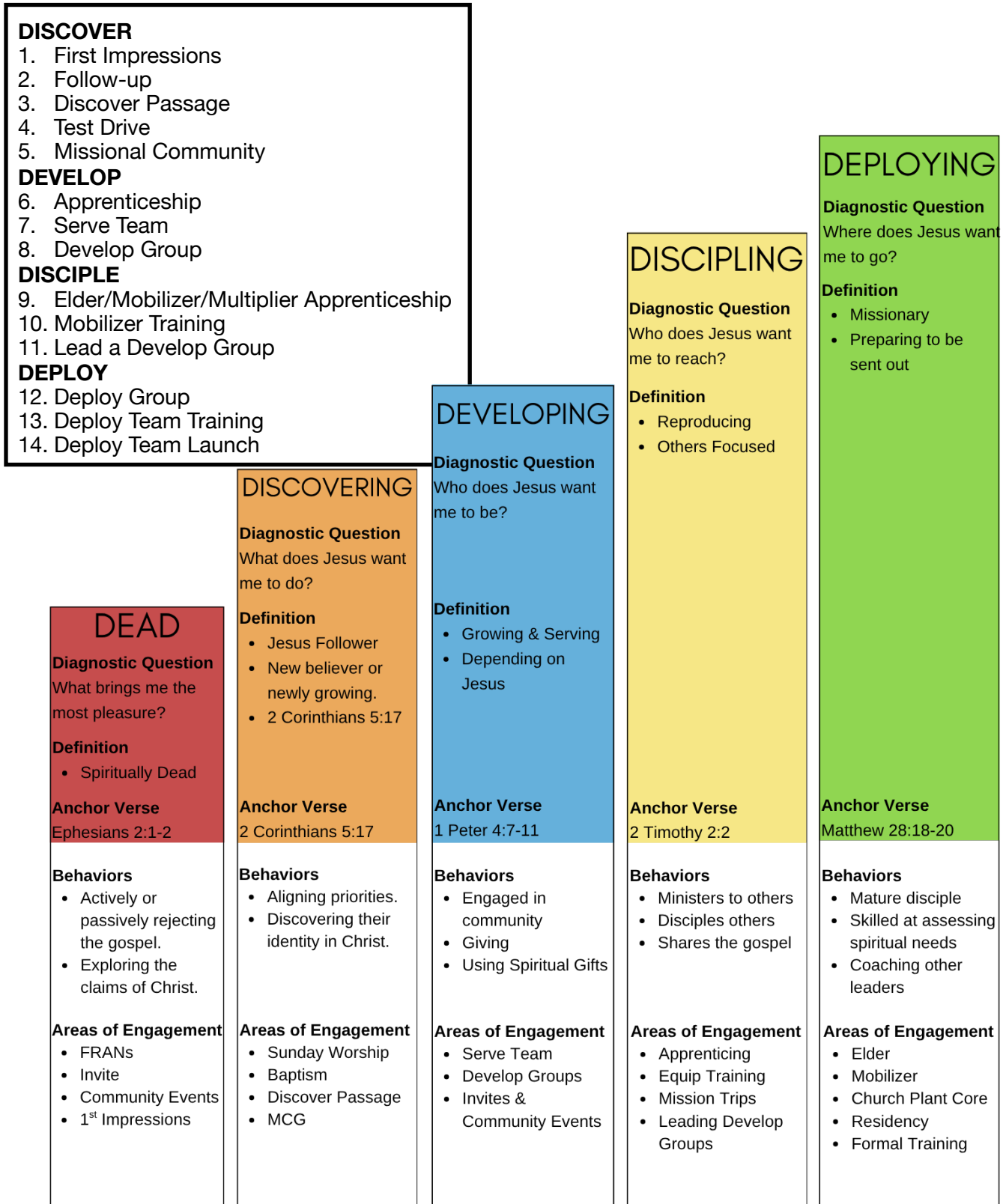


Discipleship Playbook

Passage Discipleship Environments



DISCIPLESHIP PIPELINE

Growth Stage: Deploying

Planter

Deploy
Team

SendNC
Assessment

Residency

Growth Stage: Discipling

Mobilizer

Deploy
Pathway

Deploy
Group (L3)

DGroup
Leader

Growth Stage: Developing

Leader

Apprenticeship

Ministry
Training

DGroup

Growth Stage: Discovering

Follower

Serve
Team

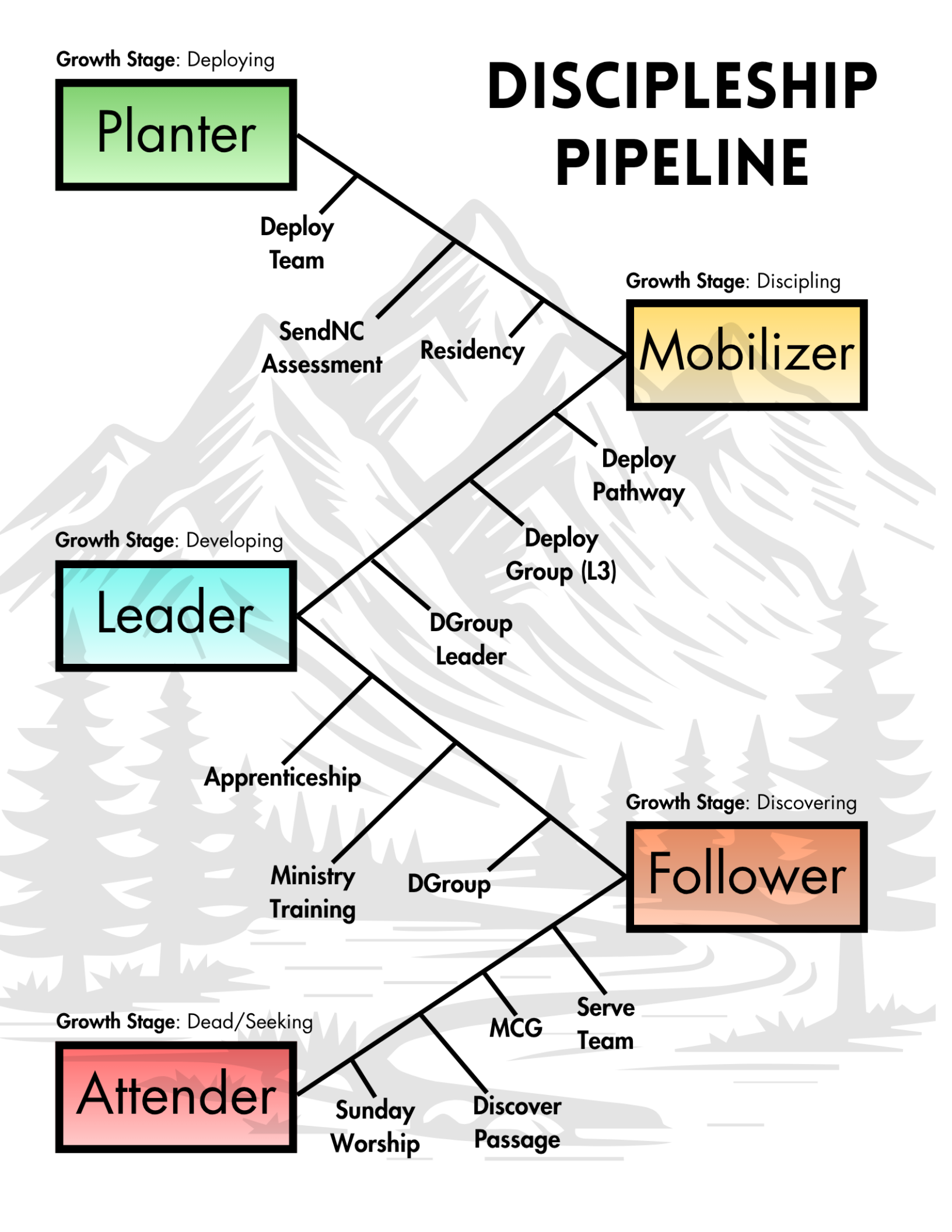
MCG

Discover
Passage

Sunday
Worship

Growth Stage: Dead/Seeking

Attender



Purpose

The Discipleship Playbook at The Passage Church is an operating system (OS) for disciple-making. It runs in the background, controls processes, keeps tasks focused, and prevents chaos. Our goal is to be followers of Jesus who make followers of Jesus, and if we hope to accomplish this we have to achieve alignment and focus across the entire ministry. This means we **MUST** make everything we do as repeatable and replicable as possible.

Intuitive vs. Replicable Discipleship

Many people who lead ministries do so intuitively. They disciple and equip without plotting out a step-by-step process. Intuitive discipleship is a great skill to have, but it is inefficient and non-repeatable. If certain leaders are the only ones able to repeat the process, we can never truly establish a multiplying ministry. In this case, growth can only come by addition. However, if each apprentice is equipped by their mentor to replicate a clear discipleship process, growth becomes exponential.

In contrast, Replicable discipleship is discipleship that can be easily repeated and the process can be easily communicated. This Playbook, functioning as our OS for discipleship, aims to make our discipleship process easy to communicate and replicate. With a proper step-by-step plan in place, anyone—not just intuitive disciple-makers—can work the steps and make disciples.

Discipleship Environments

After years of analyzing our disciple making process we determined that in order to effectively and efficiently raise up Jesus followers who are ready to deploy it would be necessary to create specific environments (or ministries) to aid each stage of development. We don't organize our discipleship around interests or demographics like in a traditional program based ministry model. Instead we find that Jesus followers are best equipped in relational environments. Therefore, we have created and continue to experiment with several formats of the relational discipleship environment. Every environment seeks to equip Jesus followers in the Six Marks (defined later) and in three ways: Practical, Theological, and Missional. The only difference between environments is the stage of development that each seeks to address.

As you read through the leadership pipeline on the previous page it should become clear that each environment is designed to move Jesus Followers along the pathway helping them progress from Discovering, to Developing, to Discipling and finally to Deploying. As we begin to consider the development of a disciple along the various stages of maturity it makes sense to consider the environments that each stage will best develop in. The graphics on the first two pages illustrate this. Each stage of development requires a different environment to help the Jesus follower continue to develop into a mature disciple who is ready to deploy. After years of analyzing our disciple making process we determined that in order to effectively and efficiently raise up Jesus followers who are ready to deploy it would be necessary to create specific environments (or ministries) to aid each stage of development.

Discovering - Phase 1 Environments

I. First Impressions

- Parking team for both services is the first point of contact for each visitor.
- First Impressions Tent is the first stop.
 1. Collect contact info
 2. Give them a bag of goodies - Makes them easy to spot.
 3. Create login/name tags for children (If Applicable)
 4. Walk them to the worship area: Point out coffee, bathrooms and children's areas.
 - USE WELCOME TEAM SCRIPT¹

¹ Appendix

5. Introduce them to someone.
 - Staff, MCG Leader, Pastor, Elder, etc.

GOALS & VALUES

- We aim to develop relationships with first time guests, attenders, and each other.
- Help others know what their next step may be: Discover Passage, MCs, equip class, serving, etc.
- As we engage with guests and regular attenders, we want to be genuine and attentive.
- The Gospel is offensive, nothing else should be: this means we take personal responsibility for
- Cleanliness, security, looking out for the left out, or reporting any maintenance issues.

MISSION FACTORS & WINS

- First time guests should become second time guests.
- Consistent, coordinated follow up from staff, elders and follow up team is crucial.
- Wins:
 - A second visit and ultimately attending Discover Passage.
 - Follow-up visits going smoothly, especially checkin with kids.
 - People remember them and greet them.

II. Follow-up

1. First Time Guests entered into tracking sheet by Monday.
2. Every guest gets an email, text and phone call.
3. Assign them to an MCG or CR for follow up.
4. Host Home For Dinner
5. Invite them to Discover Passage EVERY MONTH.
 - Phone call, text, and email. Make them tell you to stop following up.

GOALS & VALUES

- Every person who visits TPC will get a follow up contact that let's them know we are glad they came and we hope they return.
- Guests feel they have been adequately informed about how to get connected to Discover Passage and other discipleship environments.
- Guests were invited to someones home or another face-to-face meeting within 1 week of their visit.

MISSION FACTORS

- Follow-up is intended to move people to Discover Passage.
- Timely follow-up is crucial. It communicates love, urgency and intentionality.
- WINS:
 - Discover Passage attendance.
 - Face-to-face meetings.
 - Phone conversations.

III. Discover Passage

1. Host once a month on second Sunday.
2. See appendix for booklet content.
3. Guests indicate which serve team and MCG is best for them.
4. Serve team and MCG leaders reach out with invites and next steps.

GOALS & VALUES

- Introduction to the culture and values of The Passage Church.
- Explanation of core theological convictions.
- Orientation to the discipleship pathway.
- Presentation of next steps to serve, give and go (MCG).

MISSION FACTORS

- Discover Passage should move people toward membership and deeper connections.

- It can alternatively allow people to say, “not for me” which is good. No time wasted.
- Attendees have been adequately oriented to our culture and values.

WINS

- Membership Covenant Signed
- Baptism
- Indicated preference for Serve Team and MCG - generates another follow-up opportunity.

IV. Men's/Women's Events (2nd and 3rd Saturday)

1. A monthly meeting for men or women only that functions as an “on-ramp” for discipleship.
2. On ramps meet the need of a low stakes setting where people can easily show up, participate (or not), and get a taste of what our community is like.

Goals and Values

- Create a space where new families can jump in and feel welcomed and challenged.
- Intentionally moving people beyond this environment onto MCG, DGroup or Serving Team.
- An Active Learning Environment - Heavily focused on small group discussion around tables rather than monologue.

V. Missional Community

1. Weekly meetings in homes throughout our community that focus on community, scripture study, prayer and living on mission.
2. Mixed gender groups of all levels of spiritual maturity. Designed to introduce people to the habits of christian community and walking with Jesus.
3. Every group engages a “Pocket of People” to pray for and evangelize.
4. Every member of The Passage should be in an MCG.

GOALS & VALUES

- Groups are open and seeking to multiply at all times. No closed groups.
- MCG's should funnel people into serve teams, Develop Groups and Ministry Specific Training.
- WINS:
 - People join serve teams
 - People begin reading the Bible and praying together and in their alone time.
 - People begin thinking about the lost and their circle of influence.

Developing - Stage 2 Environments

VI. Develop Group

1. Weekly meetings in homes throughout our community that focus on community, scripture study, prayer and living on mission.
2. Mixed gender groups of all levels of spiritual maturity. Designed to introduce people to the habits of christian community and walking with Jesus.
3. Every group engages a “Pocket of People” to pray for and evangelize.
4. Every member of The Passage should be in an MCG.

GOALS & VALUES

- Groups are open and seeking to multiply at all times. No closed groups.
- MCG's should funnel people into serve teams, Develop Groups and Ministry Specific Training.
- WINS:
 - People join serve teams
 - People begin reading the Bible and praying together and in their alone time.
 - People begin thinking about the lost and their circle of influence.

VII. Equip Courses

1. 4 to 6 week courses designed to be practical, theological and missional.
2. Beginner and Intermediate levels (101, 201, etc. style course design)
3. Typically fall into one of the six marks of a Jesus follower.
4. Lead by staff, elders, and qualified lay leaders.

GOALS & VALUES

- Equip is an active learning environment that includes both teaching AND discussion as well as take home assignments.
- Every course must be practical, theological and missional. No learning just for the sake of it. We will put what we learn into practice.
- Every course must fit directly into at least one of the Six Marks of a Jesus Follower.
- Leaders and facilitators will have a co-leader who is being trained to lead in the future.

Discipling & Deploying - Stage 3 & 4 Environments

VIII. Deploy Group (L3)

1. Invitation Only groups of men and women designed to equip people to lead ministries and prepare for planting new churches.
2. Led by Pastors, Elders and Local Church Leaders
3. 8 Month - 1 Year commitments
4. Must have a proven record of Christlike character and leadership abilities as well as a demonstrated commitment to serving and disciple-making.

IX. Residency

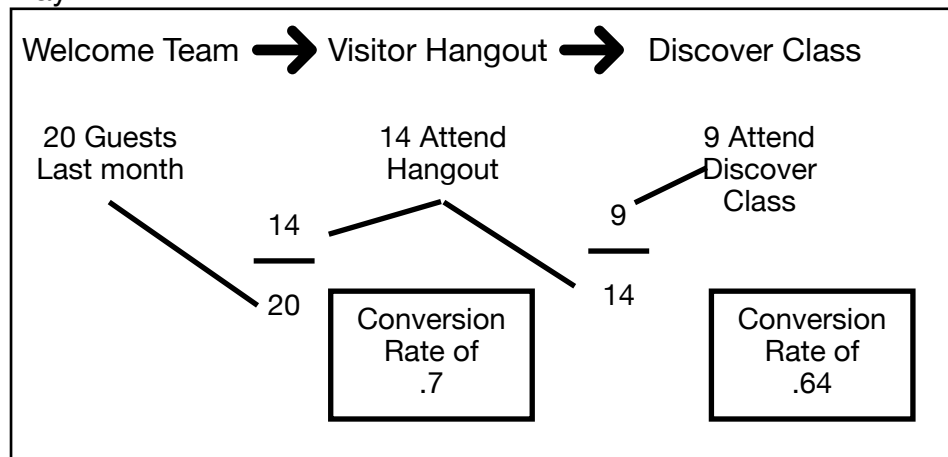
1. Prospective church planters only.
2. Led by Lead Pastor and Discipleship Pastor in conjunction with the SEND NC (NC Baptist)
3. 2+ Year commitment.
4. Some seminary preferred but not required.

Assessing Gaps in the Process

Conversion rates are important for evaluating the effectiveness of different discipleship environments. By conversion rate we mean the ability of one ministry to “convert” a disciple onto the next phase of the discipleship pathway.

In the example below, the conversion rate of your Welcome Team is the percentage of guests who attend the Visitor Hangout after service divided by the total number of first time guests over the same time period. The ideal ratio is 100% or 1 but realistically we can work towards 80% or .8

Example Pathway:



For our purposes, any pathway environment that has a conversion rate of .5 or lower is in need of extra attention.

Important Concepts

The Appropriate Place for MCG

Small group discipleship has its inherent limitations. Many ministries have unrealistic expectations about what mixed-gender groups can accomplish for disciple making. Ministers imagine that once people get into a small group they will begin to grow by leaps and bounds by virtue of attendance. Even with the best leaders and the best content, this is simply not the case.

When we put community groups too far down in the discipleship process there are two negative effects: 1) We raise the barrier to entry to a degree that most of our people will never engage in what for us is the primary means of discipleship at The Passage. 2) Our people never progress beyond joining a group and thus never become disciple makers themselves.

If we are realistic about what MCG can accomplish we will see that it is a powerful environment that INTRODUCES people to Christian community, bible study, prayer and engaging the lost. When we try to make it more than the most basic level of discipleship at our church, it cannot bear the strain and will fail. We must do the difficult work of creating a real pipeline that funnels people to other discipleship environments.

Therefore, everything in **DISCOVER** culminates in Missional Community. Discover is an introduction to walking with Jesus. Most professing Christians have never read the Bible with any consistency or method of study. This means 45% of people in our churches effectively Bible illiterate and another 30% are familiar but disengaged with the scriptures.²

- The implications of this are wide ranging and cannot be overlooked when implementing a system of discipleship.
- Most (75%) of people are not attending church weekly, not reading the Bible weekly, not growing spiritually, not fighting sin, not bearing fruit of the Spirit.
- Concordantly, spiritual maturity will be VERY low for most people who attend church, even regular attendees, due to their lack of engagement with scripture, community, and prayer.
- A note on prayer: Research suggests that prayer may be the one spiritual discipline that most evangelical Christians practice regularly, i.e. at least once a day.³ Reports show that 75% evangelicals say they pray at least daily.
- However, this is minimally helpful since undirected prayer without regular worship attendance, fellowship, scripture study and discipleship is unlikely to produce mature disciples.

² State of the Bible 2025

³ Pew Research, "Decline of Christianity in the U.S. Has Slowed, May Have Levelled Off" 2025

We need to be realistic about what's a reasonable next step for the bulk of our people. We also need to be realistic about what missional community (or other small group formats) can accomplish given the state of spiritual maturity within our congregation.

Conclusion

We advocate for placing community groups at the very beginning of the discipleship process. MCG should be the next step for anyone attending our church. It represents the lowest bar for any growing Christian. MCG is a place to begin the journey of being a disciple and discipling others.

Depth of Discipleship

With the proper place for community groups in mind it is important to note one “downside” of the lower barrier to entry into the discipleship process. With more people more easily engaged in the earlier stages of the discipleship process, depth in relationships will suffer to a small degree. This is where an adjustment in expectations for mature or maturing believers is necessary. Functionally, we are asking less of our community groups in order to make discipleship start sooner and finish stronger. The depth of relationships in MCG will be inherently capped by several factors.

First, we are seeking to always be adding people to our groups. With a consistent influx of new people the status quo is constantly being upset by fresh relationships. Second, because the people we seek to add to our groups are by default less spiritually mature, the backbone of the content will necessarily need to be focused on the foundations of discipleship not depth of discipleship. Third, the emphasis we place on multiplying groups and doing so frequently will mean that the process of “going deeper” is interrupted by the sending process. By the very nature of committing to multiplying from the start we are guaranteeing that at some point down the road we will feel the keen sting of loss when we part ways.

Despite this reality, we must remain committed to the clear command that Jesus gives us, his church, to make disciples. As Jesus followers who make Jesus followers we understand that we have not been called into a life of comfort but of discomfort for the sake of the gospel.

At this point you should be asking, “So then where do mature or maturing disciples go for deeper discipleship?” Having acknowledged that one discipleship environment cannot hope to address the needs of every stage of spiritual growth, it becomes apparent that a secondary environment is essential for people to continue to grow as followers of Jesus. That's where our Develop Group (DGroup) format comes into play. More on that later.

What is the Mission?

“The Passage Church seeks to be followers of Jesus who make followers of Jesus where we live and where God leads.”

This mission is easy enough to grasp. It’s biblical and in light of the Great Commission it just makes sense. But the question of HOW we do this remains. That is the purpose of this document: Defining and giving shape to the how of the mission.

The HOW of the mission begins with a goal. Let me state very succinctly how The Passage plans to fulfill this mission:

Become a church that plants a church every year.

This might seem like a very narrow focus. This might also seem “impossible”. You might say, “How does this help? Surely you could plant churches without actually fulfilling the mission.” Not the way we see it. In order to have the required focus to accomplish the mission we have discovered that having a concrete goal in mind is enormously helpful. It gives feet to our vision. If we leave the concrete goal of mission undefined then, over time, EVERYTHING we do has a way of being smuggled in.

Example: We launch a dozen community groups. People meet in houses weekly, spend time together, fellowship, study the Bible. They invite more people from the church to join. These people become close friends and live life together in a meaningful way. All good things. Yet, we could question how this actually fulfills the mission. Without a concrete metric of success there’s simply no way know if we’re accomplishing anything.

For The Passage, the concrete metric by which we can determine if we are successfully accomplishing the mission is church planting. If we can consistently send out pastors, elders, leaders and members to plant new churches, we know we’re being Jesus followers who make Jesus followers. The act of training, sending out and then replacing Spirit filled Jesus followers IS discipleship. The presence of a gospel preaching church where there was none IS the mark of obedience to the great commission.

When we set a lofty goal, like planting a church every year, we simply don’t have time or energy to waste on things that don’t move us toward this goal. This goal gives us the focus we need to sharpen every ministry to a point. That point is, “Does this help produce Jesus followers who are equipped to plant a church together?” If the answer is no, or even maybe, we must reevaluate.

As we seek to bring every ministry and discipleship environment of the Passage under the purview of mission it necessitates further defining the HOW. When we poke at this mission we might see that Jesus follower needs to be defined. Let’s do that next.

What is a Jesus Follower?

"A Jesus Follower is in a growing relationship with Jesus, engaged in Biblical community, actively seeking to disciple others."

We define Jesus Follower with six biblical marks that guide our multiplication efforts. These marks are what we disciple our people towards, and every ministry should equip people to one or more of these ends.

6 Marks of a Jesus Follower

1. Abide in Christ
2. Live in the Word
3. Pray in Faith
4. Build Godly Relationships
5. Serve Others
6. Own the Mission

Abide in Christ

- Seeks out time in God's presence.
- Make decisions based on Christ's guidance.
- Motivated by love rather than duty.
- Experiencing life change from worship and devotion.
- Trusts in Christ not their own works
- Peace characterizes their life - not worry.
- Confident in God's love through trials.

Live in the Word

- Regularly reads, studies and enjoys time in the Bible.
- The Bible is the standard for life, not culture.
- Can answer worldview and life questions biblically.
- Studies the Bible to discover Truth to live by.
- Fights sin with scripture.

Pray in Faith

- Prays daily at planned and unplanned times
- Prayers focus on discovering God's will rather than needs.
- Trusts God to answer.
- Seeks to grow in the discipline of prayer.
- Initiates prayer with others.

Build Godly Relationship

- Practices forgiveness
- Admits mistakes and seeks forgiveness
- Seeks out accountability
- Gentle and Kind.
- Encouraging others and calling out strengths
- Time commitments reflect valuing relationships over work, hobbies, etc.

Serve Others

- Knows spiritual gifts and uses them.
- Gives sacrificially to the church and others.
- Enjoys sharing biblical truth with others.
- Helps others identify spiritual gifts.
- Actively seeking to love others.

Own the Mission

- Regularly shares the gospel.
- Prays for non-believers.
- Makes faith known to circle of influence.
- Maintains relationships with non-believers for gospel reasons.
- Prepared to share testimony at any time.
- Actions demonstrate a commitment to the Great Commission

What is Missional Community?

“A community of Jesus followers on mission with God in obedience to the Holy Spirit that demonstrates the kingdom tangibly and declares the gospel of Jesus creatively to specific pockets of people.”

As stated earlier in this document, MCGs have a specific place in the process of producing Jesus followers who are ready to be a part of church planting. (See “The Appropriate Place for MCG” on page 6). The MCG environment plays a significant role in early discipleship. For this reason we feel that MCG should model for people the life of a church planting Jesus follower.

MCG: A Model for Church Planting

In many ways, community groups are designed so that each one functions like a “mini church plant”: with its own leadership, mission field, member care, and multiplication plan. Below are some of the important parallels:

1. Overall philosophy

- MCGs are like a “micro-church”: There’s worship, word, fellowship, prayer, mission, and member care all happening in the group, not just at the Sunday gathering.
- Each MCG identifies a specific “mission field” for each group (a neighborhood, network, or demographic) like a missional community or cell-church model.
- Serve as a pipeline for future elders, leaders, and church planters by giving real responsibility, feedback, and training in the group context.

2. Leadership Structure

- Designate a small leadership team per group: lead couple, apprentice leader, host, and deacon-type “care coordinator” (instead of one overburdened leader).
- Build in an “apprentice leader” role in every group, with the expectation that apprentices will eventually plant or take over a new group.
- Give each group a simple covenant that mirrors church planting core-team commitments: attend regularly, serve, give, pursue holiness, and engage mission together.

Role	Function
Lead Shepherd	Sets vision, leads discussion, models discipleship, trains apprentice
Apprentice Leader	Shares teaching, leads some meetings, ready to “plant”
Host	Hospitality, environment, logistics for meetings
Care Coordinator	Tracks needs, prayer, follow-up and service opportunities.
Communications	Weekly messages, reminders, updates group chat
Outreach Coordinator	Plans service/evangelism rhythms & partnerships

3. Regular Outreach to Community

- Each MCG has a specific pocket of people they are assigned to reach based on location.
- An established rhythm for outreach: the weekly meeting, monthly prayer walks, quarterly outreach focus.
- Always inviting families to join and occasionally shifting the study to accommodate non-believers.
- Partnering together to serve in your community:
 - Concrete outreach ideas a group can own: visiting nursing homes, neighborhood cleanups, food co-op / pantry partnerships, parenting or budgeting classes, single-parent support nights, or senior outreach nights.

4. Member Care

- Each group maintains its own prayer list and member roll and prays for each other regularly; leaders follow up with calls/texts as they pray.
- Encouraged to own benevolence and crisis care first (meals, visits, short-term financial help within guidelines), with the central church stepping in for bigger needs. First line of defense mentality!
- Group leaders are proactive in care practices: scheduled check-ins, simple spiritual health questions, and encouraging mutual ministry in the group (not just leader-to-member).

5. Multiplying and “planting” new groups

- There is an expected “group life cycle” (for example, once a group hits 12–15 regular adults, it begins a 6-month process to send a core to plant a new group).
- Follows the “nucleus” or “mother church” concept at the group level: a healthy group sends a small, trained nucleus (apprentice leader + 3–5 others) to start a new group in a new location.
- Planting MCG continues to coach and care for leaders of the new MCG.
- Follows the established MCG Apprenticeship Plan

6. Church-wide Missional Culture

- Community groups are the default “front door” and discipleship environment for new attenders.
- Preaching and vision casting center around the idea that groups are your main church-planting engine, not just a fellowship add-on.
- A simple illustration: if someone asked, “How would you plant a new church from scratch?” your answer should sound a lot like, “This is how we start a new community group—just multiplied and contextualized.”

Growth

When all the ingredients of MCG come together successfully, we believe that growth is inevitable. That is growth in both the number of families being disciplined AND the fruitfulness of individual lives.

Two Types of Growth

- I. Numerical
- II. Spiritual

I. Numerical Growth

- We firmly believe that MCG is one of the best ways to accelerate your spiritual growth, therefore, every group should seek to grow by adding new families at all times. There are two primary pools to pull from:
 - Passage Church Families **not currently connected to an MCG**.
 - Families in your community or pocket of people who you want to reach for Christ.
- Guidance on Navigating Numerical Growth
 - The overwhelming temptation to invite people you like and are already close to from Church will ultimately hinder your ability to fulfill the mission of growth if not held in balance with Jesus's command to go and make disciples.
 - The ULTIMATE goal of starting MCGs in our community is to create "gospel outposts" that reach the unreached. This means intentionally creating space for unconnected, unchurched, unknown people to join our community.

II. Spiritual Growth **Gospel Transformation**

It is our desire that God will use life in community and on mission for the discipleship and growth of everyone involved. As we center our efforts on the Gospel of Jesus and the Word of God, we believe leaders and participants will grow in Christ-likeness. Good leaders are important, but Gospel transformation is a task only God can accomplish.

Biblical Community

It is our prayer that leaders will facilitate an environment where community can grow. Through sharing your stories, sharing the mission, and sharing meals we pray that encouragement, support, and care will arise as we live alongside each other.

Fruitful Mission

Through the faithful ministry of those within the group it is our prayer that the hope of the Gospel be declared to those within your mission. Through the work of the missional community we pray that new disciples will be made, baptized, equipped, and sent.

Multiplication

This is detailed further below. Our hope is that as your healthy group grows there will come a day where that mission will multiply. We want to help you identify, recruit, train, and send different leaders to shepherd a community.